

# The Significance of Leadership and Management Development in Schools

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## Abstract

*This paper looks at the central role of school leadership for developing and assuring the quality of schools, as corroborated by findings of school effectiveness research and school improvement approaches. Then, it focuses on the growing importance placed on activities to prepare school leaders due to the ever-increasing responsibilities they are facing. In many countries, this has led to the design and implementation of extensive programs. In this paper, international trends in school leader development are identified. As regards the aims of the programs, it becomes obvious that they are increasingly grounded on a more broadly defined understanding of leadership, adjusted to the core purpose of school, and based on educational beliefs integrating the values of a democratic society.*

**Keywords:** *effective leadership and management, school leadership, school leaders, leadership and management, management development.*

## Introduction

In the previous chapters, we sought to explain why effective leadership and management are vital if schools and colleges are to be successful organizations, providing good learning environments for students and staff. We also showed that approaches to leadership are pluralist, with several different models being advocated and practiced. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the evidence that specific preparation is necessary if leaders are to operate effectively for the benefit of learners and the wider school community.

The case for specific preparation is linked to the evidence that the quality of leadership is vital for school improvement and student outcomes. Huber (2004a: 1–2), drawing on school effectiveness research, claims that ‘schools classified as successful possess a competent and sound school leadership’ and adds that ‘failure often correlates with inadequate school leadership’. Leithwood et al. (2006: 4) show that ‘school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning’. Leadership explains about 5 to 7 per cent of the difference in pupil learning and achievement across schools, about one-quarter of the total difference across schools. These authors also note that there would be a 10 per cent increase in pupil tests scores arising from an average head teacher improving their demonstrated abilities across 21 leadership responsibilities. They conclude with this salutary statement:

There is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. (Leithwood et al. 2006: 5)

This powerful new evidence about the importance of school leadership contradicts the previous received wisdom that leadership made little impact on school outcomes. March (1978: 219), for example, claimed that ‘any attempt to improve American education by changing its organization or administration must begin with skepticism [they are] unlikely to produce dramatic or even perceptible results’.

Given the increasing body of evidence that leadership *does* make a difference, the spotlight turns to the issue of what preparation is required to develop appropriate leadership behaviors. This relates to conceptions of the principal’s role.

Traditionally, in many countries, school leaders begin their professional careers as teachers and progress to headship via a range of leadership tasks and roles, often described as ‘middle management’. In many cases, principals continue to teach following their appointment, particularly in small primary schools. This leads to a widespread view that teaching is their main activity. Roeder and Schkutek (2003: 105) explain this perception in relation to one European country:

So far a head-teacher in Germany is seen as a *primus inter pares*, the teacher who takes care of the school as a whole along with his (reduced) teaching assignments. This role is strongly shaped along with pedagogical guidelines and closely connected to teaching.

This notion has the unsurprising corollary that a teaching qualification and teaching experience are often seen as the only requirements for school leadership.

Bush and Oduro (2006: 362) note that ‘throughout Africa, there is no formal requirement for principals to be trained as school managers. They are often appointed on the basis of a successful record as teachers with the implicit assumption that this provides a sufficient starting point for school leadership’.

The picture is similar in many European countries, including Belarus, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Portugal (Watson 2003a). However, as Kitavi and van der Westhuizen (1997: 252) note in respect of Kenya, ‘good teaching abilities are not necessarily an indication that the person appointed will be a capable educational manager’.

In the twenty-first century, there is a growing realization that headship is a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation. The reasons for this paradigm shift include the following:

- The expansion of the role of school principal
- The increasing complexity of school contexts
- Recognition that preparation is a moral obligation
- Recognition that effective preparation and development make a difference.

These arguments are explored below.

### **Leadership**

A central element in many definitions of leadership is that there is a process of influence.

Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization. (Yukl 2002: 3)

Leadership may be understood as ‘influence’ but this notion is neutral in that it does not explain or recommend what goals or actions should be sought through this process. However, certain alternative constructs of leadership focus on the need for leadership to be grounded in firm personal and professional values. Wasserberg (2000: 158), for example, claims that ‘the primary role of any leader [is] the unification of people around key values’. Day et al.’s (2001) research in 12 ‘effective’ schools in England and Wales concludes that ‘good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school’ (p. 53).

Vision is increasingly regarded as an essential component of effective leadership. Beare et al. (1992) draw on the work of Bennis and Nanus (1985) to articulate ten ‘emerging generalizations’ about leadership, four of which relate directly to vision:

1. Outstanding leaders have a vision for their organizations.
2. Vision must be communicated in a way which secures commitment among members of the organization.
3. Communication of vision requires communication of meaning.
4. Attention should be given to institutionalizing vision if leadership is to be successful.

These generalizations are essentially normative views about the centrality of vision for effective leadership. There is a high level of support for the notion of visionary leadership but Foreman’s (1998) review of the concept shows that it remains highly problematic. Kouzes and Posner (1996: 24) say that ‘inspiring a shared vision is the leadership practice with which [heads] felt most uncomfortable’, while Fullan (1992: 83) adds that ‘vision building is a highly sophisticated dynamic process which few organizations can sustain’.

It is evident that the articulation of a clear vision has the potential to develop schools but the empirical evidence of its effectiveness remains mixed. A wider concern relates to whether school leaders are able to develop a *specific* vision for their schools, given government influence on many aspects of curriculum and management.

### **Distinguishing educational leadership and management**

The concepts of leadership and management overlap. Cuban (1988) provides one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management. He links leadership with change, while management is seen as a maintenance activity.

He also stresses the importance of both dimensions of organizational activity:

By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals Leadership takes much ingenuity, energy and skill. (p. xx)

Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organizational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses. (p. xx)

Day et al.'s (2001) study of 12 'effective' schools leads to the discussion of several dilemmas in school leadership. One of these relates to management, which is linked to systems and 'paper', and leadership, which is perceived to be about the development of people. Bush (1998, 2003) links leadership to values or purpose while management relates to implementation or technical issues.

Leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools and colleges are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives. While a clear vision may be essential to establish the nature and direction of change, it is equally important to ensure that innovations are implemented efficiently and that the school's residual functions are carried out effectively while certain elements are undergoing change.

### ***Decentralization and self-management***

Educational institutions operate within a legislative framework set down by national, provincial or state parliaments. One of the key aspects of such a framework is the degree of decentralization in the educational system. Highly centralized systems tend to be bureaucratic and to allow little discretion to schools and local communities. Decentralized systems devolve significant powers to subordinate levels. Where such powers are devolved to the institutional level, we may speak of 'self-management'.

Lauglo (1997) links centralization to bureaucracy and defines it as follows:

Bureaucratic centralism implies concentrating in a central ('top') authority decision-making on a wide range of matters, leaving only tightly programmed routine implementation to lower levels in the organization. A ministry could make decisions in considerable detail as to aims and objectives, curricula and teaching materials to be used, prescribed methods, appointments of staff and their job descriptions, admission of students, assessment and certification, finance and budgets, and inspection/evaluations to monitor performance. (Lauglo 1997: 3-4)

Lauglo (1997: 5) says that 'bureaucratic centralism is pervasive in many developing countries' and links this to both the former colonial rule and the emphasis on central planning by many post-colonial governments. Tanzania is one example of a former colonial country seeking to reduce the degree of centralization (Babyegeya 2000).

Centralized systems are not confined to former colonial countries. Derouet (2000: 61) claims that France 'was the most centralized system in the world' in the 1960s and 1970s, while Fenech (1994: 131) states that Malta's educational system is 'highly centralized'. Bottery (1999: 119) notes that the UK education system 'has experienced a continued and intensified centralization for the last 30 years'. In Greece, the public education system is characterized by centralization and bureaucracy (Bush 2001).

Decentralization involves a process of reducing the role of central government in planning and providing education. It can take many different forms:

Decentralization in education means a shift in the authority distribution away from the central 'top' agency in the hierarchy of authority. Different forms of decentralization are diverse in their justifications and in what they imply for the distribution of authority. (Lauglo 1997: 3)

Where decentralization is to the institutional level, for example in England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and South Africa, this leads to site-based management. 'A self-managing school is a school in a system of education where there has been significant and consistent *decentralization* to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources' (Caldwell and Spinks 1992: 4, emphasis added).

The research on self-management in England and Wales (Bush et al. 1993; Leva\_ic 1995; Thomas and Martin 1996) largely suggests that the shift towards school autonomy has been beneficial. These UK perspectives are consistent with much of the international evidence on self-management and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1994) concludes that it is likely to be beneficial:

Greater autonomy in schools [leads] to greater effectiveness through greater flexibility in and therefore better use of resources; to professional development selected at school level; to more knowledgeable teachers and parents, so to better financial decisions, to whole school planning and implementation with priorities set on the basis of data about student [outcomes] and needs. (Quoted in Thomas and Martin 1996: 28)

Site-based management expands the role of school leaders because more decisions are located *within* schools rather than outside them. Autonomous schools and colleges may be regarded as potentially more efficient and effective but the quality of internal management is a significant variable influencing whether these potential benefits can be realized. Dellar's (1998) research in 30 secondary schools in Australia, for example, shows that 'site based'

management was most successful where there was a positive school climate and the staff and stakeholders were involved in decision-making.

The significance of self-management for leadership development is that the scope for leadership and management is much greater. While managers in centralized systems are largely confined to implementing policies and decisions made at higher levels in the bureaucracy, leaders of self-managing schools typically have substantial responsibility for budgets, staff and external relations, as well as the interpretation and implementation of what is usually a prescribed curriculum. They necessarily have more opportunities for innovation than leaders working within a tightly constrained centralized framework.

The extra responsibilities mean that it is no longer sensible, if it ever was, to regard leadership as a singular activity carried out by the principal or head teacher.

Most self-managing schools now have an extensive leadership apparatus, often including other senior managers (deputy and/or assistant principals) and middle managers (for example, heads of department or section). Young's (2006) study of large English primary schools, for example, shows an elaborate leadership pattern with large numbers of staff exercising leadership roles.

The growth in the number of leaders, and the scope of leadership, has led to developing interest in distributed leadership. As Harris (2004: 13) notes, it is 'currently in vogue'. However, she adds that it goes beyond formal roles to engage expertise wherever it exists within the organization' (p. 13). The involvement of larger numbers of staff in educational leadership and management enhances the need for effective and appropriate development for leaders. This is the central focus of this book.

### **Leadership and school improvement**

Leadership is often linked to school improvement. Almost two decades ago, Beare et al. stressed its importance:

Outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools. There can *no longer be doubt* that those seeking quality in education must ensure its presence and that the development of potential leaders must be given high priority. (1992: 99, emphasis added)

This normative statement has been echoed by many other researchers, and by policy-makers. The establishment of the National College for School Leadership

(NCSL) in England is one significant example of the belief that effective leadership is vital for school improvement.

The College's Leadership Development Framework repeats this mantra:

The evidence on school effectiveness and school improvement during the last 15 years has consistently shown the *pivotal role* of school leaders in securing high quality provision and high standards effective leadership is a key to both continuous improvement and major system transformation.

(NCSL 2001: 5, emphasis added) Harris (2004: 11) reinforces this view by saying that 'effective leaders exercise an indirect but *powerful* influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students' (emphasis added).

The relationship between the quality of leadership and school effectiveness has received global recognition. The Commonwealth Secretariat (1996), for example, referring to Africa, says that 'the head ... plays the most crucial role in ensuring school effectiveness'. The South African government's Task Team on Education Management Development also emphasizes the importance of education management:

The South African Schools Act places us firmly on the road to a school based system of education management: schools will increasingly come to manage themselves. This implies a profound change in the culture and practice of schools. The extent to which schools are able to make the necessary change will depend largely on the nature and quality of their internal management. (Department of Education 1996: 28) Huber's (2004a: 1-3) overview of leadership development programs in 15 countries reaches a similar conclusion:

The pivotal role of the school leader has been corroborated by findings of school effectiveness research for the last decades. The research shows that schools classified as successful possess a competent and sound school leadership. Studies on school development and improvement also emphasize the importance of school leaders.

This widespread belief that leadership and management are significant factors in determining school outcomes is not well supported by hard evidence of the extent and nature of school leadership effects. This issue receives extended consideration in Chapter 8 but it should be noted that Hallinger and Heck's (1998) widely accepted view is that school leadership effects account for about 3 to 5 percent of the variation in student achievement. This is about one-quarter of all the effects attributable to school variables. The combination of limited size, and indirect impact, makes it difficult to detect leadership effects. While by no means negligible, such a small percentage effect raises questions about whether the rhetoric of school leadership ('no longer in doubt', 'pivotal role', 'and powerful influence') is

really justified. Although he was writing in the late 1970s, March's caution needs to be taken seriously almost three decades later:

It is hard to show effects of organization and administration on educational outcomes. Although there are some pieces of contrary evidence, the bulk of most studies and the burden of current belief is that little perceptible variation in schooling outcomes is attributable to the organization or administration of schooling. (March 1978: 221) The beliefs have changed, and there is now more 'contrary evidence', but much more needs to be understood about whether, to what extent, and how, leaders impact on school outcomes.

### **The expanded role of school leaders**

The additional responsibilities imposed on principals in many countries make great demands on post-holders, especially those embarking on the role for the first time. Walker and Qian (2006: 297) use dramatic imagery to stress the difficulties facing new principals.

The rigors involved in the climb [to headship] accentuate during the first few years of the principal ship. The energy previously needed to climb must be transformed into quickly balancing atop an equally tenuous surface a spot requiring new knowledge, skills and understandings. In too many cases, the experience of the climb has done little to prepare beginning principals for the balancing act they are asked to perform.

The increased demands on school leaders emanate from two contrasting sources. First, the *accountability pressures* facing principals are immense and growing, in many countries. Governments, parents and the wider public expect a great deal from their schools and most of these expectations are transmitted via the principals. Crow (2006: 310), referring to the USA, points to enhanced societal demands within an 'increasingly high stakes policy environment':

The higher expectations for US principals in the area of instructional leadership increased public scrutiny of public schools, and the promotion of privatization as a public policy agenda, have significantly changed the role of school principal in the USA. US principals [also] work in a societal context that is more dynamic and complex than in the past. Changing student demographics, the knowledge explosion, the larger web of roles with which the principal interacts, and the pervasive influence of technology are a few features of this complex environment.

The pressures facing leaders in developing countries are even more onerous than those in the world's richest countries. In many countries in Africa, principals manage schools with poor buildings, little or no equipment, untrained teachers, lack of basic facilities such as water, power and sanitation, and learners who are often hungry (Bush and Oduro 2006). The Zambian education system, for example, is said to face 'wholesale systemic decay' (Harber and Davies 1997). Sapa (1991: 302) also notes the pressures arising from the 'phenomenal' expansion of the education system to fulfil the educational needs of the growing population in India.

The role of school principals is also expanding as a consequence of devolution in many countries.

### **Devolution to school level**

One of the main global policy trends is the devolution of powers to site level. In many countries, the scope of leadership and management has expanded as governments have shifted responsibilities from local, regional or national bureaucracies to school principals. This trend was noted in Australia as long ago as 1991. 'The control of many educational decisions is being transferred to schools and principals are being called upon to accept new responsibilities.

Accordingly, politicians, management consultants, bureaucrats and educators alike are asserting the need for management training at all levels' (Johnson 1991: 275). Brundrett et al. (2006: 89) make the same point in their comparative study of England and New Zealand. They say that the 'single largest change' in both countries has been the introduction of site-based management, linked to increasing accountability, leading to principals being positioned as 'the public face of the school' (ibid.: 90). Similar trends are evident in post-Socialist Eastern Europe. In the Czech Republic, for example, schools have been given the opportunity to have their own resource management and significant freedom in staffing and pedagogic domains (Slavikova and Karabec 2003). Watson (2003b) notes that this is part of a Europe-wide trend, arising from the following circumstances:

- Increasing demands from local communities to have a greater say in the ways they are governed, notably in Eastern Europe
- A belief that exposure to market forces will raise standards. Watson (2003b: 6) shows that devolution produces increasing complexity in the role of the head of the school and heightened tensions for principals: 'It leads to the need for the exercise of judgment in particular situations, rather than the simple following of rules.' We turn now to consider the extent and nature of this enhanced complexity.

### **The increasing complexity of school contexts**

Hallinger (2001: 61) notes that 'the rapid change around the world is unprecedented'.

This arises from global economic integration leading to widespread recognition that education holds the key to becoming, and remaining, competitive.

Inevitably, this has led to increased accountability pressures, as we noted earlier. Because of the devolved nature of leadership in many education systems, these pressures are exerted on site-based leaders, notably school principals, who have to deal with increasing complexity and unremitting change.

Huber (2004a: 4) makes a similar point, arguing that:

The school cannot any longer be regarded as simply imparting traditional knowledge within a fixed frame. Rather it is becoming an organization which needs to renew itself continuously in order to take present and future needs into account. This imposes the necessity on school leadership to consider itself as a professional driving force and mediator for the development of the school towards a learning organization.

Crow (2006: 315) notes the contribution of technological and demographic change to the complexity affecting school leaders. He comments that these changes must also impact on the nature of leadership preparation. One of the fastest changing societies is India and, 17 years ago, Sapra's (1991: 302) visionary analysis referred to the likelihood of increasing complexity driven by 'the educational needs of the growing population and increasing social demand for education, as well as to meet the requirements of trained manpower for the growing economy'. He adds that 'the success of educational managers to face these challenges with confidence will depend largely on the professional preparation that they will receive during the course of their career' (p. 308).

The pressures facing leaders in developing countries are particularly acute.

The complexity they experience occurs across six dimensions:

- Many children do not receive education and many also drop out because of economic and social pressures.
  - The economies of developing countries are fragile.
  - Human and material resources are very limited.
  - Many children and schools are scarred by violence.
  - There is serious poverty in many countries and killer diseases, such as malaria and HIV/AIDs, are prevalent.
  - There is widespread corruption and nepotism in many countries. (Bush and Oduro 2006; Harber and Davies 1997).
- These contextual problems exert enormous pressure on school principals who are often 'overwhelmed by the task' (Commonwealth Secretariat 1996).

### **Leadership preparation as a moral obligation**

The additional responsibilities imposed on school leaders, and the greater complexity of the external environment, increase the need for principals to receive effective preparation for their demanding role. Being qualified only for the very different job of classroom teacher is no longer appropriate. If this model was followed for other careers, surgeons would be trained as nurses and pilots as flight attendants. While competence as a teacher is necessary for school leaders, it is certainly not sufficient.

As this view has gained ground, it has led to the notion of 'entitlement' (Watson 2003b: 13). As professionals move from teaching to school leadership, there should be a right for them to be developed appropriately; a moral obligation.

Requiring individuals to lead schools, which are often multimillion dollar businesses, manage staff and care for children, without specific preparation, may be seen as foolish, even reckless, as well as being manifestly unfair for the new incumbent.

The recent emphasis on moral leadership (Bush 2003: 170) suggests a need to move beyond the purely technical aspects of school management to an approach, which is underpinned by clearly articulated values and principles. If principals are expected to operate ethically, there is an equally strong moral case for them to receive specific preparation for their leadership and management roles. Watson's (2003b: 14) question about whether the employer has 'a professional or ethical obligation to develop head teachers' should be answered with a resounding 'yes'.

### **Effective leadership preparation makes a difference**

The belief that specific preparation makes a difference to the quality of school leadership is underpinned by research on the experience of new principals. Sackney and Walker's (2006: 343) study of beginning principals in the USA found that they were not prepared for the pace of the job, the amount of time it took to complete tasks and the number of tasks required. They also felt unprepared for the loneliness of the position. Daresh and Male's (2000: 95) research with first-year principals in England and the USA identifies the 'culture shock' of moving into headship for

the first time. 'Nothing could prepare the respondents, both American and British for the change of perceptions of others or for the intensity of the job'. Without effective preparation, many new principals 'flounder' (Sackney and Walker 2006: 344) as they attempt to juggle the competing demands of the post.

Brundrett et al. (2006: 90) argue that leadership development is a 'strategic necessity' because of the intensification of the principal's role. Evidence from Sweden (Stalhammer 1986 in Glatter 1991: 223) suggests a need for heads to develop their pedagogic outlook. 'Without a "compass", the head all too easily gets into difficult waters'.

Avolio (2005) makes a compelling case for leadership development based on the view that leaders are 'made not born'. Those who appear to have 'natural' leadership qualities acquired them through a learning process, leading Avolio (2005: 2) to deny that 'leadership is fixed at birth'. This leads to a view that systematic preparation, rather than inadvertent experience, is more likely to produce effective leaders. Hallinger (2003a) stresses the importance of developing a carefully grounded relationship between leadership development, the quality of school leadership and both school and student outcomes. Earlier, his overview of research on school leadership development led to this cautious conclusion:

Policymakers will be particularly keen to know if these training interventions *made a difference* in the practice of school leadership and school performance.

Unfortunately, we cannot be sure since none of the studies were designed to address these questions [We cannot] speak with confidence about the impact of the interventions on administrative practice in schools. (Hallinger 1992b: 308)

In the 15 years since this significant comment, evidence to support the value of leadership preparation has been slow to emerge. There is a widespread *belief* that it makes a difference. Lumby et al. (in press), for example, claim that 'leadership development actually makes a difference, be it in different ways, to what leaders do in schools'. However, empirical support for such assumptions is weak and usually indirect. Heck (2003) uses the twin concepts of professional and organizational socialization as a lens to examine the impact of preparation. Professional socialization includes formal preparation, where it occurs, and the early phases of professional practice. Organizational socialization involves the process of becoming familiar with the specific context where leadership is practiced. Leithwood et al. (1992) show that both dimensions of socialization were helpful in contributing to principals' abilities to provide instructional leadership.

Heck's (2003: 246) review of research in one US state shows that 'the socialization process accounted for about one-fourth of the variance in administrative performance'. Crow (2006: 321) suggests that 'a traditional notion of effective socialization typically assumes a certain degree of conformity, a "role-taking" outcome where the new principal takes a role conception given by the school, district, university or community'. He argues that the greater complexity of leadership contexts requires a 'role-making' dimension, where new principals acquire the attributes to meet the dynamic nature of school contexts.

Bush et al.'s (2006b) evaluation of the National College for School Leadership 'New Visions' program for early headship shows significant evidence of its impact on the 430 heads involved in the first two cohorts of the program. Their survey results show high 'great help' ratings for four dimensions of personal development:

- Knowledge of educational leadership (48 per cent)
- Confidence (44 per cent)
- Coping with 'people' pressures (31 per cent)
- Ability to influence others (30 per cent). (Bush et al. 2006b: 193)

Bush et al. (2006b) also note perceived professional development benefits, including 'a clearer vision', 'a more democratic approach', being more 'inspiring and creative' and 'enthusiasm for learning'. The authors' school-based case studies show that all stakeholders perceive a shift to distributed leadership and a sharper focus on instructional leadership as a result of the New Visions experience (Bush et al. 2006b: 194–5).

## Conclusion

Effective leadership is increasingly regarded as a vital component of successful organizations. The research shows that new principals experience great difficulty in adapting to the demands of the role. The process of professional and organizational socialization is often uncomfortable as leaders adapt to the requirements of their new post. Developing the knowledge, attributes and skills required to lead effectively requires systematic preparation. Recognition of the importance of specific training and development has grown as the pressures on school principals have intensified. The greater complexity of school contexts, allied to the trend towards site-based management, has

also heightened the need for preparation. There is also an acceptance of the moral basis for specific training and a growing body of evidence showing that preparation makes a difference to the quality of leadership and to school and pupil outcomes. In the next chapter, we examine the nature of leadership development programs, including content and process.

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